

# Broadband

**Summary:** 19 million Americans still lack access to high-speed internet. It is well past time to bridge America's digital divide and build a 21st century broadband infrastructure that will meet our country's needs not only today, but for years to come. The bipartisan infrastructure plan invests \$65 billion to address our nation's digital divide once and for all.

- **Grants to states for deployment: \$42.45 billion**

- This funding supports a formula-based grant program to states, territories and the District of Columbia for the purposes of broadband deployment. The program does not favor particular technologies or providers. Projects would have to meet a minimum download/upload build standard of 100/20 megabits per second.
- The funding includes 10% set-aside for high-cost areas and each state and territory receives an initial minimum allocation, a portion of which could be used for technical assistance and supporting or establishing a state broadband office.
- To increase affordability, all funding recipients must offer a low-cost plan.
- States would be required to have plans to address all of their unserved areas before they are able to fund deployment projects in underserved areas. After both unserved and underserved areas are addressed, states may use funds for anchor institution projects.

- **Private Activity Bonds (PABs): \$600 million**

- Based off the Rural Broadband Financing Flexibility Act (S.1676), a Hassan-Capito proposal, this provision allows states to issue PABs to finance broadband deployment, specifically for projects in rural areas where a majority of households do not have access to broadband.

- **Additional Support for Rural Areas: \$2 billion**

- The provision includes supports for programs administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, including the ReConnect Program, that provide loans and grants (or a combination of loans and grants) to fund the construction, acquisition or improvement of facilities and equipment that provide broadband service in rural areas.

- **"Middle Mile": \$1 billion**

- This provision would create a grant program for the construction, improvement or acquisition of middle-mile infrastructure. Eligible entities include telecommunications companies, technology companies, electric utilities, utility cooperative, etc. The "middle mile" refers to the installation of a dedicated line that transmits a signal to and from an internet Point of Presence. Competition of middle-mile routes is necessary to serve areas, reducing capital expenditures, and lowering operating costs.

- **Tribal Grants: \$2 billion**

- This provision will provide additional funding to the Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program, which was established by the December COVID-19 relief package and is administered by NTIA. Grants from this program will be made available to eligible Native American, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian entities for broadband deployment as well as for digital inclusion, workforce development, telehealth and distance learning.

- **Inclusion: \$2.75 billion**

- Includes the Digital Equity Act. This legislation establishes two NTIA-administered grant programs (formula-based and competitive) to promote digital inclusion and equity for communities that lack the skills, technologies and support needed to take advantage of broadband connections. Also tasks NTIA with evaluating digital inclusion projects and providing policymakers at the local, state and federal levels with detailed information about which projects are most effective.

- **Affordability: \$14.2 billion**

- This provision creates a sustainable Affordable Connectivity Benefit to ensure low-income families can access the internet. The program provides a \$30 per month voucher for low-income families to use toward any internet service plan of their choosing. It builds on the Emergency Broadband Benefit, making the benefit permanent and expanding eligibility to help more low-income households, while also making it more sustainable for taxpayers.